An introduction to the concept of intercultural communicative language teaching and learning: A summary for teachers

This is a summary of a Ministry of Education-commissioned report, *Intercultural communicative language teaching (iCLT): Implications for effective teaching and learning*. This summary was written by Janet Rivers, based on a report written by Jonathan Newton, Eric Yates, Sandra Shearn and Werner Nowitzki of Victoria University of Wellington.

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1. Overview

Culture is no longer an invisible or incidental presence in language learning but instead is ... a strand with equal status to that of language.¹

This document is an introduction for language teachers to the concept known as intercultural communicative language teaching and learning. It is a summary of a Ministry of Education-commissioned report, Intercultural Communicative Language Teaching: Implications for Effective Teaching and Learning, produced through Victoria University of Wellington by Jonathan Newton, Eric Yates, Sandra Shearn, and Werner Nowitzki (the Newton report).

In The New Zealand Curriculum,² the ‘learning languages’ learning area provides the framework for the teaching and learning of languages additional to the language of instruction. The desired outcome is for students to be able to communicate effectively in their chosen language or languages when they leave school. The learning area has a core strand of communication, and two supporting strands, language knowledge and cultural knowledge. The Newton report relates to the cultural knowledge strand and the role of that strand in supporting the outcome of communicating effectively.

The New Zealand Curriculum states that in the cultural knowledge strand of language learning:

> [S]tudents learn about culture and the interrelationship between culture and language. They grow in confidence as they learn to recognise different elements of the belief systems of speakers of the target language. They become increasingly aware of the ways in which these systems are expressed through language and cultural practices. As they compare and contrast different beliefs and cultural practices, including their

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own, they understand more about themselves and become more understanding of others.3

The Newton report

In the context of the role of cultural knowledge in language teaching and learning, the Newton report discusses and develops the particular concept of *intercultural communicative* language teaching and learning. In line with the curriculum description above, this concept emphasises communication as the primary goal of language learning, sees culture and language as closely linked; recognises that culture is always present when language is used, sees cultural skills as important as language skills in language learning; and emphasises *interculturality*—the development of a deeper awareness of one’s own language and culture as one is learning the target language and culture, and understanding the dynamic interplay between them.

The Newton report includes a review of the literature on intercultural language teaching. Based on their findings, Newton et al. coined the term *intercultural communicative language teaching* to describe this new, intercultural approach to languages teaching and learning and, drawing on their literature review, they developed a framework of six principles to guide intercultural communicative language teaching in New Zealand.

What does this summary cover?

The purpose of this summary is to provide a practical and accessible introduction for teachers to the concept and practice of intercultural communicative language teaching and learning. The summary does not cover all of the Newton report but highlights those aspects of most immediate relevance to teachers. In particular, it summarises the key findings from the literature review on intercultural language teaching, and presents Newton et al.’s framework of principles for effective intercultural communicative language teaching and learning.

Where quotations are included, they are as cited in the original report. Selected references are given at the end of the summary. For more detailed information, and the full list of references, readers should refer to the full report.

A note on terms

Where the literature uses the term ‘intercultural language learning’, that term has been retained in the Newton report and this summary. However, Newton et al.’s term ‘intercultural communicative language learning’ is the preferred term as it emphasises both intercultural and communicative aspects of the approach proposed by the Newton report for language teaching in New Zealand.

The Newton report and the Ellis report

The Newton report complements an earlier Ministry of Education-funded literature review of second language learning theory and pedagogy, Instructed Second Language Acquisition: A Literature Review, by Professor Rod Ellis.4 Both the Newton report and this summary should be read in conjunction with the Ellis report.

Key points on intercultural communicative language teaching and learning

- There is a broad consensus internationally for language teaching in schools to develop not only linguistic skills but also cultural skills and attitudes. Learning languages is seen as valuable for fostering cross-cultural understanding.

- This consensus is reflected in The New Zealand Curriculum, where, in the learning languages learning area, cultural knowledge has equal status with language knowledge, and both support the core strand of effective communication. Culture and language are seen as closely interrelated, and culture as present whenever language is used.

- Placing culture at the centre of language learning has led to a new perspective on teaching languages—a concept referred to in the research literature as ‘intercultural language teaching and learning’. This intercultural perspective emphasises that, in

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4 Ellis, 2005.
learning about the culture of the target language and the interrelationship between culture and language, students will also be learning about their own culture, and developing a deeper awareness of both cultures and their languages.

- Intercultural language teaching and learning refocuses the goal of learning by shifting from a narrower focus on linguistic competence towards a more holistic goal of *intercultural communicative* competence. Intercultural communicative competence requires an understanding of the relationship between culture and language and emphasises learning how to communicate effectively rather than being able to speak like a native speaker. Newton et al. coined the term *intercultural communicative language teaching* to describe an approach to teaching that focuses on developing intercultural communicative competence.

- Based on its review of the literature, the Newton report has developed a framework of six principles to guide intercultural communicative language teaching and learning in New Zealand; namely that intercultural communicative language teaching:
  1. integrates language and culture from the beginning
  2. engages learners in genuine social interaction
  3. encourages and develops an exploratory and reflective approach to culture and culture-in-language
  4. fosters explicit comparisons and connections between languages and cultures
  5. acknowledges and responds appropriately to diverse learners and learning contexts
  6. emphasises intercultural communicative competence rather than native-speaker competence.

- New Zealand’s bicultural status, defined by the Treaty of Waitangi and through legislation, means New Zealanders live in an intercultural context. Thus, New Zealand, with its bicultural heritage and te reo Māori as an official language, has a rich resource to draw on in developing intercultural understanding in languages education.

- New Zealand’s close links with the Pacific means Pasifika languages also have an important place in language learning in New Zealand classrooms.
2. Intercultural language teaching and learning - the literature review

The person who learns a language without learning a culture risks becoming a fluent fool.\(^5\)

The Newton report carried out an extensive review of the literature on intercultural language teaching and learning — international trends, the theoretical and conceptual basis for the concept, and what it means to teach and learn languages from an intercultural perspective.\(^6\)

**An international emphasis on cultural knowledge in language teaching and learning**

As noted earlier, *The New Zealand Curriculum* introduces a cultural knowledge strand that is of equal status to the language knowledge strand, with both supporting the core strand of communication. This is in line with a growing international awareness of the role that education, and languages education in particular, has to play in developing tolerance and understanding between people from different cultural backgrounds who live together in increasingly multicultural and multilingual societies. The Newton report found a broad consensus internationally for language teaching in schools to develop not only linguistic skills but also a range of intercultural skills and attitudes.

The report cites several examples of government and intergovernment support for interculturally informed language teaching and learning.

In Europe, for example, the Council of Europe’s *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*\(^7\) draws on the principles of interculturally informed pedagogy. The framework, which provides common guidelines for language instruction across Europe, listed ‘intercultural awareness’ and ‘intercultural skills’ as learner

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\(^5\) Bennett, Bennett, & Allen, 2003, p. 237.

\(^6\) This section summarises the main findings from the literature review. It does not refer to all the literature on which the Newton report bases its conclusion—for that information, refer to the full report.

\(^7\) Council of Europe, 2001.
competencies, and refers to the importance of intercultural communication and intercultural experiences.\textsuperscript{8}

The British Department for Education and Skills emphasises the notion of intercultural understanding in its National Languages Strategy, and British policy makers accept that developing cultural awareness is an essential component of education for all. Its national strategy states:

\begin{quote}
In the knowledge society of the 21st century, language competence and intercultural understanding are not optional extras, they are an essential part of being a citizen.\textsuperscript{9}
\end{quote}

Language skills are also vital in improving understanding between people here and in the wider world, and in supporting global citizenship by breaking down barriers of ignorance and suspicion between nations. Learning other language gives us insight into the people, culture and traditions of other countries, and helps us to understand our own language and culture.\textsuperscript{10}

Germany and the Netherlands have recently introduced an even broader approach to intercultural teaching and learning. For example, various curricula for languages in Germany state that the development of intercultural communicative competence in the target language is the overarching achievement objective.

In China, especially since 2001 when it entered the World Trade Organisation, there has been a shift in foreign language teaching from a focus on learning the language only to one that also emphasises intercultural awareness. The 2006 \textit{New Standards for English Course}\textsuperscript{11} has cultural awareness (which comprises cultural knowledge, cultural understanding, intercultural communication and cultural competency) as one of the five objectives that English teaching and learning should focus on.

In 1996, the United States National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project published a framework for second language learning, \textit{Standards for Foreign Language Education Project}.

\begin{thebibliography}{11}
\bibitem{8} The proficiency descriptors for learning languages in \textit{The New Zealand Curriculum} have been adapted from the \textit{Common European Framework for Languages}.
\bibitem{9} Department for Education and Skills, 2002, p. 5.
\bibitem{10} ibid., p. 13.
\end{thebibliography}
Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century, that places ‘culture learning at the forefront of language instruction’.  

The Australian government National Statement of Languages in Education in Australian Schools (2005-2008) makes specific reference to the importance of intercultural language learning which develops learners’ capabilities to:

- communicate, interact and negotiate within and across languages and cultures
- understand their own and others’ languages, thus extending their range of literacy skills, including skills in English literacy
- understand themselves and others, and to understand diverse ways of knowing, being and doing
- further develop their cognitive skills through thinking critically and analytically, solving problems, and making connections in their learning.

The Newton report concludes that:

[T]here appears ... to be broad consensus on the role of languages education in fostering cross-cultural understanding. New Zealand is clearly on firm ground in developing an approach to language education which reflect[s] this consensus.  

The New Zealand context

In discussing an intercultural communicative approach to language teaching and learning, it is important to take account of the New Zealand context—a bicultural nation founded on the Treaty of Waitangi and referenced in legislation, and in which the indigenous language, te reo Māori, is an official language.

This has special resonance for languages learning because it means New Zealanders are living in an intercultural context already—the ‘lived experience’ discussed later.

The following sections from Te Marautanga o Aotearoa, although written for schools in which te reo Māori is the medium of instruction rather an additional

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13  Newton et al., 2009, p. 12.

14  Te Marautanga o Aotearoa outlines the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes for kura teaching through the medium of te reo Māori.
language, encapsulates the concept of the inseparability of language from culture that is at the heart of an intercultural communicative approach to language learning.\(^\text{15}\)

The language is the life force of Māori
Through being spoken
the language lives
Through the survival of the language
Māori are enobled

Māori language is the vehicle for Māori cultural practices and thought, enabling the manifestation of all aspects of the Māori world. The Māori language is an inherited treasure, a treasure supported by the Treaty of Waitangi. Language is the essence of culture. Each person, each tribal group, each region has its own language, mana, spirituality, beliefs and customs. Ultimately it is through Māori language that the full range of Māori customs can be expressed, practised, and explained. Through the learner knowing Māori language, they can access the Māori world and understand their role in it. Being immersed in Māori leads the learner to greater proficiency.

\[
\text{Ko te reo te manawapou o te Māori} \\
\text{Mā te kōrero te reo e ora ai} \\
\text{Mā te ora o te reo ka rangatira te tangata}
\]

Ko te reo te waka kawe i te wairua me te whakaaro, e whakatinanatia ai ngā āhuatanga katoa o te ao Māori. He taonga tuku iho te reo Māori, he taonga e tautokohia ana e te Tiriti o Waitangi. Ko te reo te iho o te ahurea. He reo, he mana, he wairua, he whakapono, he tikanga tō tēnā tangata, tō tēnā iwi, tō tēnā rohe. Mā te reo Māori rawa e whakahua, e kawe, e whakamārama te huhua noa o ngā tikanga Māori. Mā te mātau o te ākonga ki te reo Māori, ka mārama tōna huarahi ki te ao Māori, me tana mahi hoki i roto i te ao Māori. Ko te rumaki te tino huarahi e matatau ai te ākonga ki te reo Māori.

*The New Zealand Curriculum* also places particular emphasis on the special place that te reo Māori has in languages learning.

[Te reo Māori] is a taonga recognised under the Treaty of Waitangi, te reo Māori, a primary source of our nation’s self-knowledge and identity, and an official language. By understanding and using te reo Māori, New Zealanders become more aware of the role played by the indigenous language and culture in defining and asserting our point of difference in the wider world.

Ko te reo Māori te kākahu o te whakaaro, te huarahi i te ao tūroa.

By learning te reo and becoming increasingly familiar with tikanga, Māori students strengthen their identities, while non-Māori journey towards shared cultural understandings.16

Thus, whether used as the medium of instruction, learned as an additional language or used to support the learning of other additional languages, te reo Māori offers a rich resource for intercultural communicative language learning in New Zealand.

Because of New Zealand’s close relationships with the peoples of the Pacific, Pasifika languages also have a special place in languages learning, and likewise provide an authentic dimension for intercultural communicative language learning.

The theoretical and conceptual basis for an intercultural communicative approach to language teaching and learning

Having established the importance being placed internationally on the role of culture in language teaching, the Newton report looks more specifically at the theoretical and conceptual basis for an intercultural communicative approach to language teaching and learning.

Intercultural language teaching and learning

Intercultural language teaching and learning, as it is termed in the literature, is different from approaches to teaching language that focus on language without reference to culture, and also different from approaches that teach language and culture separately from each other and which primarily transmit information about a culture:

Intercultural language learning involves the fusing of language, culture and learning into a single educative approach. It begins with the idea that language, culture and learning are fundamentally interrelated and places this interrelationship at the centre of the learning process.…

Intercultural language learning involves developing with learners an understanding of their own language(s) and culture(s) in relation to an additional language and culture. It is a dialogue that allows for reaching a common ground for negotiation to take place, and where variable points of view are recognised, mediated and accepted.17

Intercultural language teaching and learning raises awareness of the pervasive presence of culture in language. It uses learning processes such as interacting, exploring, comparing, and experiencing languages and cultures to develop in learners the competencies that allow them to communicate effectively across cultural boundaries.

Intercultural language teaching and learning has much in common with the broader field of educational research on multicultural education and diversity education, even though the underlying ideologies differ. In New Zealand, for example, research projects such Te Kauhua18 and Te Kotahitanga19 have considerable relevance for intercultural language learning.

**Intercultural communicative competence**

Intercultural language teaching and learning refocuses the goal of learning by shifting from a narrower focus on linguistic competence towards a more holistic goal of *intercultural communicative competence*—the ability ‘to communicate and interact across cultural boundaries’.20 This refocusing is reflected in the Council of Europe’s framework for intercultural language learning, which identifies the knowledge, skills and attitudes ‘which language users build up in the course of their experience of

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17  Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino, & Kohler, 2003, p. 43.
language use and which enable them to meet the challenges of communication across language and cultural boundaries’. 21

A model of intercultural communicative competence

Byram (1997), one of the foremost theorists in the field of intercultural language teaching and learning, proposes a model of intercultural communicative competence that has five components: attitudes; knowledge; skills for interpreting and relating; skills for discovering and interacting; and awareness.

**Attitudes**
The attitudes required for effective intercultural communication and learning comprise two aspects: (a) values and beliefs, curiosity, and openness and (b) relativising self and valuing others. Byram describes these as ‘readiness to suspend disbelief and judgment with respect to others’ meanings, beliefs and behaviours’, and ‘a willingness to suspend belief in one’s own meanings and behaviors, and to analyze them from the viewpoint of the others with whom one is engaging’, 22 — requirements that apply to teachers as well as students.

**Knowledge**
Knowledge includes knowledge of self, of other cultures, and of social and cultural processes. Knowledge of self is knowledge about society and cultures in one’s own country. Knowledge about other cultures includes information about such things as everyday living, interpersonal relations, values and beliefs, body language and social conventions. Knowledge of social and cultural processes is knowledge about culture in general and how it affects behaviour.

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21 Council of Europe, 2001, p. xii.
22 Byram, 1997, p. 34.
Skills for interpreting and relating
Skills for interpreting and relating involves ‘the ability to interpret a document or event [or visual materials] from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one’s own’. 23

Skills for discovery and interaction
Skills for discovery and interaction is ‘the ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction’. 24

Awareness
Here, awareness refers to awareness of one’s own culture and language, as well as the language(s) and culture(s) of the target group.

Intercultural communicative competence and the native speaker
The Newton report notes that, in the literature, it is generally considered that native speaker-level communicative competence is an unrealistic target for most learners—and, from an intercultural perspective, it is also an undesirable one because it assumes that language learning leads to a form of assimilation. Rather, the aim of intercultural communicative competence is for learners to understand their own identity in relation to others, not to replace identities.

Viewing traditional approaches to language teaching from an intercultural perspective
The Newton report also examines the literature on traditional views and approaches to languages teaching, and examines these through the lens of an intercultural stance.

Static and dynamic views of culture
The Newton report identifies two views of culture in the literature, static and dynamic. 25

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23 ibid., p. 61.
24 ibid., p. 61.
The *static view* of culture treats it as self-contained factual knowledge or cultural artefacts to be observed and learned about, rather than participated in. Teaching focuses on topics such as the history, customs, institutions, arts, literature and geography of a country. A static view of culture offers no clear link between language and culture. The self-contained nature of the cultural component means that it could be taught just as effectively outside the language classroom.

The *dynamic view* of culture sees culture as constantly renegotiated through language, as language constructs, reinforces and reflects the cultural world in which it is used. The report notes that a challenge for teaching is that we are often unaware of the cultural values which allow us to communicate within our own culture, let alone those that underpin behaviour in another culture, with which we come in contact. Greeting routines, for example, might involve a handshake, raised eyebrows, a kiss, or a nod of the head. However, lying beneath these behaviours are non-observable values, attitudes and expectations to do with status, relationships and social distance, all of which are uniquely structured and perceived within different cultural contexts.

A dynamic view of culture aligns closely with an intercultural communicative approach to language teaching and learning.

**Traditional approaches to culture in language teaching and learning**

The literature review identifies four traditional approaches to culture: culture as *high culture*; as *area studies*; as *societal norms*; and as *practice*.²⁶

The *culture as high culture* approach equates culture with ‘civilization’ and is often referred to as the ‘Big C’ approach to culture. High culture is the traditional focus of culture studies in language teaching, an emphasis seen particularly in foreign language programmes at university level, which focus on the literary canon and other expressions of ‘high art’ or valued cultural knowledge (as expressed in visual arts, music, and so on).

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²⁶ Liddicoat et al., 2003.
*Culture as area studies* focuses on knowledge about a country or society, often presented as background knowledge to language learning, but only loosely linked to the language itself. Culture is something to be observed, with the learner external and excluded from the cultural focus. Topics include a country’s history, institutions, transport, famous figures, and geography. An area studies approach to culture is very much aligned with static views of culture. It focuses on cultural knowledge that is self-contained and usually not related to language; such knowledge could be taught just as effectively outside the language classroom.

The *societal norms* approach views culture as the practices and values which typify a society. Within this approach, typical topics include the pragmatics of politeness and directness, respect, non-verbal communication, and speakers’ religious and societal beliefs. Teaching culture involves, for example, teaching learners to consider the kinds of behaviour expected of users of a language in various contexts.

The *culture as practice* approach emphasises the lived experience of the target culture, rather than accumulation of facts about the culture. Students are offered a wide range of cultural experiences and interactions in order to develop a mature and realistic view of the target culture. With the ‘culture as practice’ approach, culture and interculturality can be introduced at the start of language learning, because even ostensibly simple language which might be taught early in a programme, such as forms of greetings, can be rich in sociocultural information. For example, Japanese uses of plain, neutral, or honorific verb forms, or the uses of pronoun forms for ‘you’ in European languages. In both these examples, the grammar is straightforward but learning to use the terms appropriately requires an understanding of the social and cultural dimensions of language use.

**An intercultural stance on traditional approaches**

The Newton report views each approach from an intercultural stance.

*High culture from an intercultural stance*

An intercultural stance on ‘high culture’ (i.e. study of arts and traditions) encourages students to reflect on the origins of and values associated with cultural artefacts, and to make explicit comparisons with arts in their own culture. It embraces a broad range of
cultural expressions of literature, art, music, and performance, ensuring that the target culture remains accessible and relevant to all language learners. Students are encouraged to view culture as belonging to all people, and to consequently explore a wider range of cultural artefacts.

Area studies from an intercultural stance
An intercultural stance on ‘culture as area studies’ encourages attention to the particular alongside the general. For example, in learning about the education system in a target language culture, learners can be encouraged to find out about a particular learner’s experience of the system, as well as general facts about the school day, national exams, class sizes and so on. This approach shifts the focus from what learners ‘should’ know about a country to considering the historical, social and geographical knowledge that will support learners’ growing respect and understanding of the cultural experience of others. This focus on the lived experience of individuals within a culture reflects a shift to viewing culture as practice.

Societal norms from an intercultural stance
An intercultural stance on ‘culture as societal norms’ can be used to challenge cultural assumptions. A criticism of the societal norms approach is that it too easily presents learners with stereotypes of the target culture and individuals within that culture. To address this problem, learners can be encouraged to focus first on stereotypes of their own culture, and thus gain insights into the constructed and subjective nature of stereotypes. This also addresses to some extent the criticism of the societal norms approach as positioning both native speakers and language learners as observers of culture who are subject to external rules of behaviour.

Culture as practice from an intercultural stance
‘Culture as practice’ is the most closely aligned of the four traditional approaches to an intercultural communicative approach to teaching and learning an additional language. There are three aspects to viewing ‘culture as practice’ from an intercultural stance: exploring self; exploring culture; and comparing cultures.

Exploring self. Intercultural communicative language teaching and learning encourages learners to discover the less visible cultural dimensions of their own lives, and to use
this self-awareness as the basis for being able to understand cultural otherness, and for making sense of intercultural interactions.

Learners need to become aware of what is meant by culture, and what aspects of their behaviour and language use are culturally specific. Intercultural communicative language teaching and learning requires self-reflection, through which learners come to understand how their culture influences their use of language, and how their communicative interactions reflect their culture. This is a crucial starting point for developing intercultural communicative competence.

It applies equally to teachers. Research into the experience of Māori students in mainstream education has shown the need for teachers to reflect on their own cultural practices, and be willing to align their pedagogy more closely with the cultural values of students from different cultural backgrounds.27

*Exploring culture.* One pathway for helping learners explore culture in language is that proposed by Liddicoat et al., as shown in Figure 1.28

![Figure 1: A Pathway for Developing Intercultural Competence](image)

The starting point is exposure to a wide range of authentic texts and sources (including oral, performative, visual and written texts and sources) or opportunities for interaction with speakers of the target language (*input*). Learners are encouraged to notice features about the communication that are unfamiliar (*noticing*). This requires learners to draw on their knowledge of their own culture, and make comparisons between the observed

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27 Bishop, Berryman, & Richardson, 2002.
28 Liddicoat, 2002b.
communication and their own. They then discuss the reasons for these features as well as their personal response to them (reflection). Learners next practise the communication, trying out new forms, expressions or strategies derived from the earlier input (output). Learners then attend to how ‘comfortable’ these feel and how successful the communication was interpersonally (noticing again). Finally, they reflect again on what they have learned.

Four key learning and teaching processes underlie the pathway in Figure 1: awareness raising; experimentation; production; and feedback. In awareness raising, learners are introduced to new input about language and culture, using authentic texts wherever possible. They are encouraged to notice differences between the input and their own practices, and to talk about what they notice. In the process of experimentation, learners begin working with their new knowledge. This involves short, supported communicative tasks, often with a specific focus on students’ language and cultural needs. With production, learners integrate the information they have acquired in actual language use through role play and communication with native speakers of the language. Finally, through the process of feedback, learners discuss how they felt about speaking and acting in a particular way.

Feedback from the teacher should allow learners to work towards discovering what Kramsch\(^29\) refers to a ‘third place’—an intercultural position between cultures, from which the learner can negotiate differences and interact comfortably across cultures. The goal of intercultural communicative language teaching is to bring about this shift in position, so that learners are not rooted only in the experiences and identity derived from their existing cultures and languages. Neither, however, do they reposition themselves within the target culture.

Comparing cultures. Intercultural communicative language teaching emphasises understanding not only one’s own cultural world but also how it relates to the cultural worlds of others. It encourages learners to look for similarities and differences between their own and another culture, using their own culture as the starting point. Comparing cultures is a practical focus for language teaching which allows learners to develop more sophisticated concepts of culture.

\(^{29}\) Kramsch, 1993.
Conclusions

There is growing emphasis internationally on the role of culture in language teaching, particularly what Newton et al. refer to as intercultural communicative language teaching and learning, and a growing body of research on this new approach that explains why it is important and how it might be practised. Intercultural communicative language learning and teaching differs from approaches to language teaching that focus on language with little reference to culture, and from approaches in which teaching about culture is secondary to teaching language or is treated as a standalone strand alongside language. Intercultural communicative language teaching starts from the point of view that language and culture are integrated. Such an approach does not transmit information about culture. Rather, it focuses on raising awareness of culture in the lived experience of the learners and people from the target language culture as well as other cultures present in a classroom or community.
3. A framework of principles

[Our] framework identifies and describes a set of core claims concerning intercultural language learning that emerge from and find support in the extensive and rapidly growing research literature in this field.\(^\text{30}\)

Based on their review of the literature, Newton and colleagues have developed an evidence-based framework of six principles\(^\text{31}\) to guide the teaching and learning of culture in languages education in New Zealand.

The six principles are that intercultural communicative language teaching (iCLT):

1. integrates language and culture from the beginning
2. engages learners in genuine social interaction
3. encourages and develops an exploratory and reflective approach to culture and culture-in-language
4. fosters explicit comparisons and connections between languages and cultures
5. acknowledges and responds appropriately to diverse learners and learning contexts
6. emphasises intercultural communicative competence rather than native-speaker competence.

To emphasise the importance of both the intercultural and the communicative aspects, Newton et al., have coined the term *intercultural communicative language teaching*, and this term is used in this chapter. Figure 2 shows the relationships among the six principles (the principles are denoted by the numerals in parentheses).

\(^{30}\) Newton et al., 2009, p. 78.

\(^{31}\) For information on the research evidence on which these principles are based, refer to the full report.
Figure 2: A Framework of Principles for Effective Intercultural Communicative Language Teaching
Principle 1. iCLT integrates language and culture from the beginning

Every message a human being communicates through language is communicated in a cultural context. Cultures shape the ways language is structured and the ways in which language is used. A language learner who has learnt only the grammar and vocabulary of a language is, therefore, not well equipped to communicate in that language.32

Intercultural communicative language teaching emphasises the connectedness of culture and language, and prioritises the goal of developing interculturally competent communicators (see principle 2 for discussion of intercultural competence).

The language–culture nexus is seen in the intricate ways that language and culture co-construct each other. A simple example of co-construction can be seen in the terms ‘mate’ or ‘bro’ in New Zealand English. On the one hand, these terms reflect cultural values of camaraderie and egalitarianism located in New Zealand’s sociocultural history. On the other hand, to the extent that the terms remain in common parlance, they reconstruct and maintain the cultural values with which they are associated: ‘Every time we speak we perform a cultural act’.33 Culture, from this viewpoint, is dynamic, and in dynamic interplay with language, as the quotation from Liddicoat at the beginning of this principle sums up.

Intercultural communicative language teaching seeks to highlight of the way culture permeates our everyday lives and interactions. It does this by integrating learning cultural knowledge and language knowledge from the beginning, rather than treating them as separate strands. Thus, culture is an important part of the teaching of all language macroskills (reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing and presenting), rather than a separate macroskill. The way teachers can apply this principle to teaching practice is seen in principles 3 to 5: teachers encourage learners to be experientially involved with other languages and cultures through communication and interaction (principle 2); to explore culture-in-language (principle 3); and to discover connections with other cultural worlds through comparison (principle 4). The integration of culture

32 Liddicoat, 2004, p. 17
33 Kramsch, 1993.
and language is more easily achieved in classrooms informed by communicative language teaching and task-based language teaching, since these approaches require active participation and experiential learning. In fact, the adoption of intercultural communicative language teaching promotes a fuller realisation of communication by focusing learners’ attention on the effects of the implicit messages conveyed in their choice of linguistic forms and communication strategies.

The first principle concludes with the phrase ‘from the beginning’. This emphasises the point that teachers should be guiding learners’ conceptualisations of culture from the beginning of the language learning process. Separating language and culture can lead to stereotyping and prejudice. Attention to culture and interculturality in the beginning stages of language learning is easily achievable, because of the rich cultural content found in ostensibly simple language, such as forms of greeting and attendant behaviour. Similarly, aspects of culture such as the coding of family relationships, the naming of rooms in a house and expressions of politeness and respect are all appropriate topics for the beginning stages of learning, while also being equally rich topics for intercultural exploration.

**Principle 2. iCLT engages learners in genuine social interaction**

[Language] is a social practice, a social accomplishment, a social tool.

In as much as our social lives are culturally shaped, so also is language. The Newton report uses the term ‘culture-in-language’ to capture this relationship. For language teaching to adequately respond to these views of language and culture, it must provide learning opportunities that are themselves dynamic, experiential and interactive. Language learning is a social process that flourishes when learners not only observe cultural representations and behaviour, linguistic or visual, but also experience them first hand.

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This approach is different from traditional, linguistically focused language teaching, although its emphasis on interaction both complements and embraces the communicative approach which informs language teaching in New Zealand schools. It mirrors the New Zealand curriculum’s key competencies of ‘relating to others’ and ‘interacting effectively with a diverse range of people in a variety of contexts’.

Intercultural communicative language teaching approaches interaction in two ways. First it treats any interaction involving the target language and culture as an opportunity to explore linguistic and cultural boundaries, and to engender awareness of one’s own as well as the other’s ways of communicating and maintaining relationships, and of dealing with cross-cultural misunderstandings and communication breakdowns. Secondly, interactions are used to directly explore the cultural worlds, beliefs, values and attitudes of others through topics which provide opportunities for explicit discussion of cultural comparisons. Thus, learners experience culture first through the way communication proceeds, and secondly through the content of what is discussed or written about. From an intercultural perspective, interaction is not simply a tool for developing fluency; it provides opportunities for learners to confront their culturally constructed worlds and cultural assumptions, and so to learn more about themselves. *The New Zealand Curriculum* makes a similar point, noting that ‘through their learning experiences, students will learn about [among other things] their own values and those of others’.37

Personal communication with native speakers and interaction and exploratory talk with teachers and others, particularly talk that involves tasks and role plays, provide important opportunities for learners to notice and explore culture-in-language and to develop communicative awareness.

**Principle 3. iCLT encourages and develops an exploratory and reflective approach to culture and culture-in-language**

Culture encompasses much more than the traditional arts, conventional practices, institutions and the visible manifestations of people’s lives. Using Weaver’s metaphor

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of an iceberg, these dimensions of culture make up the small, visible segment of the iceberg above the surface. Beneath the surface lies a much larger, less visible part of culture made up of values, beliefs, and thought patterns. Much of the Te Kotahitanga project involves teachers coming to understand the invisible culture of Māori children in mainstream classrooms—what the researchers refer to as ‘Māori sense-making processes (ways of knowing)’—and shaping pedagogy to embrace these culturally specific processes. The iceberg metaphor can be applied equally to culture-in-language. Culture is manifest in language in obvious ways, such as in overt politeness forms (e.g., Japanese forms of address) and in culturally distinct genres such as karakia, an ‘ava ceremony, or a wedding speech. But it is also deeply embedded in language in less obvious ways such as the requirements for polite and formal language, the patterns and extent of conversational feedback, the degree of tolerance for overlapping speech and interruptions, the degree of indirectness in speech acts such as requests and refusals, and a vast number of other communicative subtleties displayed in the everyday use of language.

Culture defies easy description and involves much more than ‘facts’. Teaching that focuses largely on learning about visible culture thus misses a large portion of cultural experience. Intercultural communicative language teaching responds to this issue by shifting focus from transmission of objective cultural knowledge to exploration by learners of both visible and invisible culture, and, most importantly, to exploration of ‘culture-in-language’. Exploring culture involves learners in constructing knowledge from experience and reflection. Factual information has its place, but this information is interrogated by learners so as to reveal insights and understanding about the lived culture experience of others.

Exploratory learning is encapsulated in the vision expressed in the New Zealand Curriculum for a curriculum that will produce young people who are ‘critical and creative thinkers’, and ‘active seekers, users and creators of knowledge’. Exploratory learning involves a process of discovery that allows learners to develop their individual

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38 Weaver, 1993.
39 Bishop & Glynn, 1999, p. 131
conceptualisations of culture and to decentre from their taken-for-granted cultural world. The starting point is usually learners’ exploring their own culture and cultural identity, and through this lens of self-awareness, examining their attitudes towards the target language and culture, looking at what they already know or believe, before gaining new insights.

As learners begin to understand the concept of culture and cultural differences, they should begin to understand that culture learning is not simply a matter of accruing information and facts. Instead, it involves observing and analysing what Byram calls ‘social processes and their outcomes’. In other words, they develop ‘critical understanding of their own and other societies’ (ibid), an awareness of what constitutes culture, and how it affects everybody’s behaviour and use of language. In this way, learners can challenge and replace cultural stereotypes with more empathetic and self-aware perceptions and attitudes. The *New Zealand Curriculum* states, ‘As they move between, and respond to, different languages and different cultural practices, they [the students] are challenged to consider their own identities and assumptions.’

An additional aspect of this principle is that it involves the teacher as well as the learners in the process of exploration. Research by Byram and Cain led them to the conclusion that teachers themselves are learning, as they allow students to explore and discover new facts and ideas and make comparisons with what they already know. This is congruent with the concept of ‘ako’ in kaupapa Māori.

It is important to note that this principle does not preclude traditional approaches to culture, which involve information about a country, its institutions, society and history. Indeed, Byram argues that, ideally, the teacher would combine the two approaches, provided that learners are encouraged to see cultural information as subjective and dynamic. It is also recognised that the age of learners will govern the extent to which critical self-reflection is feasible. Similarly, the level of linguistic skills development

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43 Kramsch, 2006, p. 107
46 Bishop, Berryman, & Richardson, 2002.
will govern the amount of exploration which can occur in the target language. An exploratory approach to culture opens up many opportunities for learners to make connections between their cultures. This is discussed in relation to the next principle.

**Principle 4. iCLT fosters explicit comparisons and connections between languages and cultures**

Comparing languages and cultures is a fundamental process in intercultural language learning, and is widely discussed in the literature. Both Byram and Kramsch, two leading scholars in intercultural language learning, have written extensively on the insights into self and others that can be achieved through guided comparisons between cultures.\(^{48}\) In increasingly multicultural classrooms, these comparisons and connections can be multi-faceted, as learners explore and share each other’s cultures, while cooperatively exploring a new culture and learning a new language. In a practical guide to integrating culture in language instruction, Tomlinson and Matsuhara\(^{49}\) suggest that teachers begin and end each activity ‘in the minds of the learners’, through such activities as encouraging them to think about an experience in their own culture, before providing them with a similar one in another culture, or ‘getting [learners] to “translate” a new experience in another culture into an equivalent experience in their own culture’. Maintaining this kind of awareness of culture is a primary goal of intercultural language learning.

For comparison to be effective in intercultural communicative language learning, it needs to be a reflective, interpretive comparison which draws on the learners’ current knowledge as well as the new knowledge they are encountering. This is captured in Finkbeiner’s ‘ABC’ model.\(^{50}\) This learning tool involves three steps, described in Figure 3.

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\(^{49}\) Tomlinson & Matsuhara, 2004, p. 4.

\(^{50}\) Finkbeiner, 2006.
The three steps of the ABCs

A as in *Autobiography*

Each learner writes or narrates relevant aspects and/or key events from his or her autobiography.

B as in *Biography*

Learners cooperate with a partner from a different cultural background. Each of them conducts an in-depth, audio or videotaped interview with a partner from a culture different from his or her own. The interviewer will then construct a biography describing the key events in that person’s life.

C as in *Cross-Cultural Analysis and Appreciation of Differences*

Learners study their autobiographies and compare them to the biographies they have written. They write down a list of the similarities and differences.

Figure 3: Finkbeiner’s ABC Model of Cultural Understanding and Communication

It is important to emphasise that comparison of a target culture with one’s own culture is *not* an end in itself. Instead, it is a process which is designed to facilitate movement by the learner into what is referred to in the intercultural literature as ‘a third place’.

This third place is an intercultural position between cultures, a position from which the learner can negotiate differences and interact comfortably across cultures.

Comparing cultures is a practical focus for language teaching which aims to allow learners to develop more sophisticated concepts of culture, and helps to undermine notions of the immutability of cultural values and cross-cultural prejudices. Instruction focused on raising cultural awareness and making connections has the ultimate goal of producing what Byram calls *intercultural speakers*—that is, people who have ‘the ability to communicate and interact across cultural boundaries’.

Finally, a brief comment on the word ‘explicit’ as it occurs in this principle. Evidence from the literature makes it clear that intercultural issues need to be addressed explicitly and openly rather than being left to take care of themselves, on the assumption that they will be imbibed indirectly through exposure and experience alone. Indeed, there is

51 Kramsch, 1993.
evidence to suggest that, without guidance, language teaching can have an inconclusive, or worse, a negative effect on cross-cultural attitudes.

**Principle 5. iCLT acknowledges and responds appropriately to diverse learners and learning contexts**

Teaching a language interculturally entails recognising and embracing diversity in the classroom, especially as it relates to learners’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds, a crucial consideration for New Zealand teachers facing ever more culturally diverse classes. The growing body of New Zealand research on teaching for diverse learners and culturally responsive teaching highlights the effectiveness of instructional practices that match the culturally shaped ways of knowing that learners bring to the classroom. One of the characteristics of quality teaching for diverse students identified in a recent best evidence synthesis on education for diverse learners in schooling states that ‘effective links are created between school and other cultural contexts in which students are socialized, to facilitate learning’. The synthesis identifies a set of research-based features related to this characteristic, two of which closely align with intercultural language teaching: ‘Student diversity is utilized effectively as a pedagogical resource’ and ‘Quality teaching respects and affirms cultural identity (including gender identity) and optimises educational opportunities’.

The Te Kotahitanga project, in which all teachers in the participating schools, including language teachers, are trained in kaupapa Māori based pedagogy, puts these characteristics into practice. As a result of the implementation of this culturally responsive teaching, the attitudes and values of students towards school have shifted and there has been greater engagement in learning activities and improved levels of achievement.

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53 For example, Alton-Lee, 2003, 2005; Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Samu 2004, 2006; Tuuta, et al., 2004.
54 Alton-Lee, 2003, p. 3.
56 Bishop et al., 2003.
The importance of acknowledging diversity is also implied in one of the 10 principles for successful instructed learning proposed by Ellis, namely that: ‘Instruction needs to take account of individual differences in learners’.  

Motivation is another consideration. The extent to which each individual is willing and able to learn a new language in the classroom is influenced by motivational dispositions developed through their family, community upbringing and schooling. Motivation has been extensively researched in educational psychology and second language acquisition research and the evidence shows it is important to have specific teaching strategies for creating motivating learning conditions and for maintaining and protecting motivation.

Just as each learner has a unique set of attributes and learning experiences, so also each of the 14 languages taught in New Zealand schools is uniquely positioned, by virtue of the relationship between the communities for whom the language is a native tongue or lingua franca, and communities within the wider New Zealand environment, as well as in schools and classrooms. Intercultural language teaching uses these relationships in two ways: connecting learners to the target language culture to facilitate learning opportunities through interaction and cultural experience; and treating the relationships between cultures and languages as topics to be explored and learnt about as part of language learning.

In connecting learners to the target language, for New Zealand’s two legislated official languages, te reo Māori and New Zealand sign language, the connections and opportunities are shaped not only by proximity to speech communities for these languages, but also by the political momentum that their status as official languages of New Zealand provides and, in the case of te reo, by Treaty of Waitangi and the status of the Māori people as tangata whenua. The Pasifika languages in the curriculum (gagana Sāmoa, Tongan, vagahau Niue, Cook Islands Māori and gagana Tokelau) also have the benefit of substantial speech communities located within New Zealand. An added dimension is that Tokelau is a non-self governing territory administered by New Zealand and Niue and the Cook Islands have a special relationship with New Zealand.

57 Ellis, 2005, p. 41.
They are all New Zealand citizens. A substantial number of Pasifika learners are learning these languages as heritage languages.

One of the features for Chinese and to a lesser extent, Japanese and Korean, for connecting learners is the number of native speakers of these languages studying as international students or recently arrived residents. For certain languages, especially languages associated with more typically distant speech communities such as French, German and Spanish, telecollaboration opens up a wealth of opportunities for intercultural communication.

In exploring the relationships between cultures and languages, one of the cognitive capacities that underlies intercultural competence is ‘[k]nowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one’s own and in one’s interlocutor’s country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction’.\(^{58}\) Similarly, The New Zealand Curriculum states that the interactions and learning experiences that take place in a school should encourage students to learn about, ‘the values on which New Zealand’s cultural and institutional traditions are based’, and ‘the values of other groups and cultures’.\(^{59}\) An intercultural stance on learning in the language classroom provides many opportunities for these values to find expression.

Principle 5 has addressed two types of diversity in relation to language learning: cultural and linguistic diversity among learners and diversity in the ways that different languages are present in the New Zealand learning context. Both are a source of intercultural learning opportunities through which learners come to value ‘diversity, as found in our different cultures, languages and heritages’, as stated in The New Zealand Curriculum.\(^{60}\)

Principle 6. iCLT emphasises intercultural competence rather than native speaker competence

The final principle addresses the goal of language teaching and learning. It challenges the often implicit benchmarking of learner proficiency or progress against notional

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\(^{58}\) Byram, 2006b, p. 24.


native speaker competence, and proposes instead that intercultural competence provides a more realistic goal of instruction.

One of the more obvious problems with the model of native speaker competence is that it is an impossible target for most language learners. Furthermore, the goal of native speaker competence may assume an undesirable assimilationist goal, encouraging the learner to separate from his or her own culture and to adopt a new sociocultural identity.

One of the reasons for the pervasive influence of the native speaker model is that it is an invisible but nevertheless strongly present influence in the influential concept of ‘communicative competence’. However, from an intercultural perspective, communicative competence is itself still incomplete, since it is concerned only with speakers within a speech community. It fails to identify the competencies required to communicate interculturally, or across cultural boundaries.61 The assumption that native speakers are models for cultural competence is also misguided, because no native speaker is an authority on their culture, in the same way that no individual is a perfect linguistic model (because of variations in class, region, register, and so on).62 The implication of these points is that language learners should be encouraged to critically analyse whatever they observe in native speaker interactions, as proposed in Principle 3, and to make informed choices about what behaviour is an appropriate model for imitation.

Another reason for not taking native speaker norms (linguistic or cultural) as preferred models is that there is always more to learn, because cultures and languages are always changing. This reinforces the notion that schools need to prepare learners for change and life-long learning, a central part of the vision for education in New Zealand, as expressed in The New Zealand Curriculum.

A shift in emphasis from native speaker competence to intercultural competence broadens the goals of instruction to include the knowledge, skills, awareness and attitudes which enable learners to ‘meet the challenges of communication across

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language and cultural boundaries’. Thus, intercultural learning focuses not only on knowledge *about* a second language culture, but also on other less tangible, more subjective competencies.

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63 Council of Europe, 2001, p. xii.
4. Summing up

The Newton report presents a new direction for languages teaching in New Zealand that focuses on the role of intercultural awareness in developing learners’ competence in communicating in the target language. The report describes this as intercultural communicative language teaching and, based on its review of the literature, has developed a framework of six principles to guide effective intercultural languages teaching in New Zealand.

The literature review found a growing consensus internationally that learning a language additional to the language of instruction involves more than linguistic proficiency. There is recognition also of the importance of understanding culture, with policies internationally reflecting an awareness of the role that education, and languages education in particular, has to play in developing tolerance and understanding between people from different cultural backgrounds who live together in increasingly multicultural and multilingual societies.

In its review of the literature, the Newton report found a developing area of research providing a theoretical and conceptual base for intercultural language teaching and learning which views culture and language as closely linked; culture as ever-present in language; and cultural skills as important as language skills. The concept of interculturality in language learning involves a deepening awareness of one’s own language and culture as one learns the target language and culture, and an understanding that there is a dynamic interplay between one’s own and the target language and culture.

Interculturality fits with the New Zealand curriculum in that it aligns with the cultural knowledge strand of learning languages, which in turn, with the language knowledge strand, supports the main strand of communication. A key aspect of an intercultural perspective on language learning is that it broadens the goal of learning to include intercultural competence alongside linguistic competence.
Intercultural language learning has particular resonance in New Zealand in the context of its unique bicultural and multicultural context. Such a bicultural and multicultural context provides a rich resource for learning an additional language, in that many classes will have more than the language and culture of instruction to draw on in developing intercultural language awareness.

A shift in the direction of intercultural language learning offers opportunities for all New Zealanders that will guide their understanding and ability to cope effectively with the growing diversity of languages and cultures within the country and in their interactions internationally.
Selected references

The following references are those cited in the summary. For the complete list of references consulted by Newton et al., refer to the full Newton report.


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